

Interview with Henry Dearborn

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

HENRY DEARBORN

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Initial interview date: May 8, 1991

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Q: How did your assignment to the Dominican Republic come about and what were you doing?

DEARBORN: I suppose from the spectacular point of view it was probably the most, because relations were fast deteriorating with the Trujillo dictatorship with which we had been playing along for about 30 years. Things had more or less suddenly started to go into a tail spin. I was sent there as Deputy Chief of Mission. The Ambassador had had my predecessor recalled.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

DEARBORN: Joseph Farland. He didn't get along with his DCM so he had him recalled. That was just about the time I was coming out of the War College and they sent me there. I always remember Bill Snow was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America and he called me over to tell me where I was going when I came out of the War College. He told me about this difficulty that had largely been caused by my predecessor talking out of turn and saying things outside the Embassy that the Ambassador didn't approve of. Bill said

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they had picked me for several reasons, and one was that I “didn't talk much”. I always thought that was very funny.

Q: I am right now reading a book by a man who came a little after you, Martin, called “Overtaken By Events.” I never focused much on the Dominican Republic, but apparently the Trujillo regime was about as odious a regime as you can have, and yet we were unhappy with a person like Peron who was practically snow white when compared to Trujillo.

DEARBORN: Peron was in exile in the Dominican Republic, but he left just before I got there.

Q: Could you explain our relationship at the time you were there in 1959, and what the situation was there?

DEARBORN: The situation over many years had been that the United States didn't exactly approve of him, but he kept law and order, cleaned the place up, made it sanitary, built public works and he didn't bother the United States. So that was fine with us. About the time I got there his iniquities had gotten so bad that there was a lot of pressure from various political groups, civil rights groups and others, not only in the US but throughout the hemisphere, that something just had to be done about this man. He had his torture chambers, he had his political assassinations and he forced people to do things they didn't want to do. He would take a business leader and say, “I want you to give a speech praising me on such and such an occasion.” He would see a successful business and demand a big cut out of it.

All these things were mounting up and opposition to him was growing. There had been a few attempts to assassinate him in the past, but they hadn't been successful, obviously. There were three main props that held Trujillo in power: one was the US, because we were semi-friendly and didn't do anything to get him out; one was the Catholic church which took the long view and all he had to do was build a few churches and be nice to the

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Church and they were willing to tolerate him; and the other was the business community because he had always kept law and order and cleaned up the country when it was previously a mess.

But just before I got there, when Joe Farland got there, the business community was fed up with the way they were treated. The Catholic Church felt that they couldn't go along with this pariah any longer because it was giving them a bad name. And the United States was feeling all this pressure from various sectors at home and abroad to do something about the monster.

His personal relations with the US became worse. He sent his son, Ramfis, up to Leavenworth to the Army Staff College and he didn't take it too seriously. He spent a good deal of his time off the West Coast with his yacht dating Kim Novak and other actresses, etc. So when it came time for graduation they refused to give him any kind of recognition. Ramfis had never been told no in his whole life and was furious. Trujillo was furious and considered it a slight.

Some of our ambassadors felt they had to get along with Trujillo. Joe Farland took a different view. He started reporting all his iniquities—the torture chamber, who had been killed and under what circumstances. Trujillo would take a perfectly honorable person and write anonymous letters to the press questioning his or her character. I remember one case of a lady doctor who he said was a lesbian. Things like that...just mean. People were disappearing. People were afraid to talk anywhere where people could listen to them. I remember one reporter for US News and World Report came to town. He had been there a few days and had a few unsavory experiences. He said to me one day, “You know, I spent two years in Moscow, but I never really felt afraid 'til I got here.” He was sitting in his hotel room one night with the door locked. The door opened and a great monstrous man came in, stood there and looked at him and then without saying a word turned around and walked out. They were trying to scare him into not saying anything against the government.

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Trujillo also had a few angels in the United States. There were southern Senators who thought he was great. Some public figures went down there...

Q: Who were some of these?

DEARBORN: Senator Eastland was one.

Q: Oh, yes from Mississippi.

DEARBORN: He wasn't the only one. Not only Senators, but also business people who he wanted to butter up. They would come back after being given the red carpet treatment and say good things.

Q: How did we act at the Embassy? When these people came and received the red carpet treatment, would we try to give them an accurate picture of what was happening?

DEARBORN: Sometimes they bypassed the Embassy and sometimes the favors done for them were in the United States.

Q: Did you have the feeling when you were there that the Embassy was turning around and really trying to tell it the way it was?

DEARBORN: Yes, by the time I got there yes. Not while I was there, but just before I got there. Farland was doing it.

Q: How did Farland and Trujillo get along?

DEARBORN: They got along progressively worse the longer he stayed there. I have forgotten when Farland arrived, but he had been there over a year, certainly, when I got there. Trujillo had already begun to sense that Farland was talking to the opposition, which, of course, was a no, no. There wasn't supposed to be any opposition, but every

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once in awhile you could be caught talking to somebody he didn't want you to talk to and you would hear about it. So relations were not too good.

I arrived there the first of July, 1959, and that Fourth of July party...(Trujillo had always been invited and when he came, for security reasons, he would always require a separate room with one special person waiting on him and him alone)...was the last time he was ever in the Embassy.

The reporting to the Department became more and more oriented towards saying what was wrong with things.

Q: Were you given any feedback from the Department saying Senator Eastland doesn't like this or something like that?

DEARBORN: No, we didn't have any pressure to moderate our reporting. But the pressures from human rights and other groups on the Department and our government had been such that the US government attitude was turning around by that time. While Farland was still Ambassador there was a plan drawn up for cooperation with the opposition and letting them know that if they succeeded in overthrowing Trujillo, we would favor them. We called them the pro-US opposition. Some of the opposition was living outside the country, the exiles. Some of these were quite leftist and led by Juan Bosch and the Department wasn't too happy about them taking power. This was a plan drawn up and approved back in Washington.

Farland was there until May 1960 when I became Charg#. In August we severed diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic as a result of a meeting of Foreign Ministers in San Jose, Costa Rica. All the American Republics voted to sever diplomatic relations with Trujillo because of the pressure put on them by Venezuela because Trujillo was caught red-handed trying to assassinate President Betancourt of Venezuela. It was indisputable. His agents were caught. The Venezuelans insisted that solidarity be shown

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on this. We were not averse to that because we were pretty much put out by him ourselves by that time.

Then, I think it was August 21, when diplomatic relations were broken, we continued consular relations. So I switched to being Consul General. Three weeks before the break I didn't even have an exequatur, but obtained one just in time.

Q: Which is the permission to perform consular duties in a country.

DEARBORN: Knowing that we were going to break, but they didn't know, I sent over asking for an exequatur for myself and the chief of the political section of the Embassy and maybe one or two others. Once we broke there wouldn't have been anybody to run the office. I wouldn't be there, the chief of the political section wouldn't be there, the agencies would be gone. In two or three weeks I received the exequaturs and within a couple of weeks we broke relations.

I always said this was the only time that I chose my own ambassador. There weren't many left once all the Republics of the hemisphere broke relations. But there were the British, Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, French, Italians—I think only about ten embassies left. I recommended to the Department that they ask London if the British Ambassador could represent us. He was one of the no-nonsense about it types. My judgment at that time was proved correct because he was great. The day...I told him we were going to break relations on such and such a day...and on the day of the break he came over to the office, brought a stack of British stationery and said, "All you have to do is write notes to the Foreign Office just as you always do and send them over to me. I will sign them." He said, "Of course, you are going to have to learn to write in English."

We didn't have many communications with the Foreign Office, but I did have a few times when I needed to get something across, problems we had, etc. So he proved to be great.

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A couple of weeks later a CIA message came from Washington (the CIA types had to leave with all the rest) asking me if I would be willing to carry on the CIA station chief job. Ambassador Farland had had contacts with the opposition and had brought me in on them. Even the station chief did not deal with them. I was the only one who could really carry on with them, because they were very skittish having had bad experiences with American Embassy people in the past. Things had gotten back to Trujillo, so they really didn't trust anybody. But they had gotten to trust Farland and me. So I carried on the contacts with the opposition reporting to CIA. We were using all these weird means of communication because we didn't want to be seen with each other. Things like notes in the bottom of the grocery bag, rolled up in cigars, etc.

Q: What were you doing with the opposition?

DEARBORN: They were asking us for advice at times. They were asking us for help at times. We didn't always give them what they wanted, but they knew that if they got into power that we would be supporting them. They also kept being hopeful that we might help them in more ways than we might be willing to. For instance, they told us that they wanted to do this by themselves, but they wanted our help.

As time went on and Trujillo didn't collapse, they began to have more violent ideas as to what they might do to him. Eventually they developed an assassination plot which because of my close relationship with them I was fully aware of. He was assassinated on May 30, 1961. I knew they were planning to do it, I knew how they were planning to do it, I knew, more or less, who was involved. Although I was always able to say that I personally did not know any of the assassins, I knew those who were pulling the strings. I knew everything except when. The only reason I didn't know when was because they didn't know either. There had to be a certain set of circumstances when they could put their plan into action. The last few days were rather hairy because I had told the Department via CIA communications (I had a different typewriter on which I typed out my messages to the opposition so that it wouldn't be traced to Embassy typewriters) all about the plan. I recall a

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frantic message from the Department, I guess signed off on by President Kennedy, saying, in effect, "Look, we have all this trouble with Castro; we don't want any more trouble in the Caribbean. Tell these people to knock it off." So I communicated to the opposition people that Washington was very much against any attempt at assassination. The answer I got back from them was, "Just tell Washington it is none of their business. This is our business. We have planned it and we are going to do it and there is nothing you can do about it." I relayed this to Washington. I am sure there were some in Washington who were skeptical; that there was an alarmist down there in the consulate.

The night of May 30, 1961, the Chinese Ambassador was giving some kind of a money raising thing at the country club for charity to which I went. We started back around 11:00 and ran into a roadblock along the ocean highway. They were stopping all cars and making everybody get out. They looked in trunks, pulled up rugs, etc. I had a CIA fellow in the car (along about January the CIA had sent a couple of people in to the consulate) and I said, "Bob, this is it. I am sure this is it." They wouldn't let us continue on that road, they sent us back along another road into town. We got to the Embassy, where I had been living for about a year, and the telephone rang and one of my main contacts of the opposition said, "It is over, he is dead." I knew immediately what happened and went down to the office and sent off a message to Washington.

A little later, maybe an hour or so, I had gone to bed, the phone rang and it was a call from a girls school there run by American nuns. An American bishop (there were six bishops in the Dominican Republic and one was an American), had gotten in trouble with Trujillo who had threatened him in his bishopric up in San Juan de la Haguana and for safety sake he was living in the girls school for a time. Well the nuns called and said, "You know, Bishop Reilly has been kidnaped from the school and we don't know where he is. We want you to come over right away." So I called the British Ambassador. I couldn't get through to him but got his number two man, Bill Harding, and said, "Bill, will you please meet me over at the school for girls."

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I got over to the girls school and it was a mess. The nuns wore white cassocks and there were little blood specks on them. I said, "What happen?" They said, "About 15 of these thugs came in and started firing guns. We didn't get hit but little specks of brick came off the wall and nicked our faces." Then they took us to the Bishop's room where the pet dog that the invaders had killed was lying across the threshold. They had kidnaped the Bishop and taken him off to who knows where.

Then Bill Harding arrived and shortly after him British Ambassador McVittie. Then one of the Dominican generals came. I described what had happened and explained we didn't know where the Bishop was and we were concerned for his safety since he was an American citizen. The General said he would go back and talk to the President. We decided to look for further assistance.

There wasn't a Papal Nuncio at the time, but there was a charg# d'affaires. I said, "Let's go over to the Nuncioatura. Bishop Reilly is an American citizen, but the Vatican should have an interest in this." We roused the charg# Monsenor del Guidici. He was no help. He was obviously scared. He was afraid of doing anything that might get him in wrong with his bosses. The British Ambassador wanted him to go over with him to the Foreign Minister—get him out of bed and raise a ruckus. But Monsenor del Guidici said, "I don't think they will hurt the Bishop, do you?" I said, "I think they would hurt the Bishop. They threw rocks at him and threw him out of his rectory. It was just luck that one of those rocks didn't kill him. I don't agree with you." The British Ambassador rose to the occasion and said , "If you don't want to go I will go by myself."

He went off to see the Foreign Minister. Bill Harding and I, probably about 4:00 by now, went back to the girls school and who should be sitting on the sofa in the front hall but Bishop Reilly. He was the first one to tell me, after I had gotten my initial message, that Trujillo had been assassinated. What had happened to him was that his captors took him to the air force base outside the city, San Isidro. Somehow President Balaguer, who was Trujillo's figurehead president, heard about it and sent word out to the base to bring

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the Bishop to see him. When he arrived, Balaguer said, "I'm terribly sorry about what happened to you but you know the Generalissimo has been assassinated tonight and these fellows through an excess of zeal thought that you might be involved in it because the relations between you had been bad." So I sent out a message about Bishop Reilly. It was a wild night.

It wasn't for another day or two that the general public knew that Trujillo had been assassinated. They didn't give out the information right away.

Q: Well the aftermath of the thing was terribly disorganized wasn't it? In other words the opposition group didn't take advantage of this.

DEARBORN: What happened was; Ramfis was in Europe. The minute he heard about it he chartered a plane and flew back to the Dominican Republic. Balaguer was the civil leader, but Ramfis was still head of the air force. The family was definitely a group to be reckoned with. Balaguer wasn't completely independent even now that Trujillo was dead.

The assassins picked the time they did it because the circumstances were right. They knew on some nights he went to visit his mother and after visiting her he would get into a nondescript car and drive along the coastal highway to see his mistress. He would do that completely unscheduled and didn't worry too much about it because nobody knew in advance. But the opposition had a spy in the garage who reported to them that this was the night. So they had two cars mobilized. One got in front of his car and one got in back and they forced him off the road. He had a gun but they overpowered him and killed him. That is how it happened.

Then they didn't know if at the time of the funeral whether the family or the opposition might cause some problems. So I didn't dare go to the funeral because I was afraid I would have to call in the Navy which was just over the horizon—the biggest naval force since World War II was sitting just over the horizon— and didn't want to go away from

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my communications. I sent the number two man to the funeral. So there were all sorts of speculation as to why I hadn't gone to the funeral.

About a week later, I received a phone call one morning at 7:00 a.m. from Ted Achilles who was with the Task Force in the Department. He said, "Henry, we want you, your wife, and the children out of there on the noon plane. We think you are in danger," the concern being that Ramfis and his group had killed all the assassins except for two and was unpredictable. So I said, "There is no noon plane but there is a plane to Puerto Rico at 2:00 and I could get on that, I guess." We were living in the Embassy and our pictures were on the wall and our clothes were in the closets and drawers. I said to my wife, "Look, you take the house and I will take the office and we will do the best we can." So my wife went through the house with another wife who was still at the post. She went from room to room and put everything that belonged to us in the middle of the floor. I went to the office where we were pretty streamlined by that time. We even had our secret files in a burn barrel ready to burn up because we didn't know what was going to happen. About a month before that we had gone through everything and shipped back to Washington everything that we didn't absolutely need, because we just didn't know what might happen—we didn't have diplomatic immunity anymore. Trujillo was good at staging things and could have staged a raid on the Consulate General and disclaimed any knowledge of it.

I called the British Ambassador and said, "You know I wouldn't ask you to do this unless it was extremely urgent, but could you come over to the house." He came over and I told him everything that was happening and that I was leaving at 2:00.

The Admin officer, who was still there was going...(we had already loose packed most of our furniture when we moved into the Embassy because we didn't need it and stored it in the garage)...to pack up the other things lying in the middle of the floors and send them to Bogota, our next post. It was the best move we ever had. We didn't miss a single thing. The only mistake was that I got an Embassy lamp.

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A funny incident, Evelyn Cotterman who was the Admin. Officer's wife, was helping us around the bedrooms. I had my shirt, tie, shoes and socks on but couldn't find my pants. I said, "Evelyn where are my pants?" She said, "Oh, my god, I packed them." They had to go back down to the car outside and unpack my pants so that I could leave the country with dignity.

Q: When Ramfis took over...?

DEARBORN: He didn't really take over. Let me clear up the relationship there. The day before I got this phone call to leave, I went over to the Palace to talk with President Balaguer on instructions from the Department. I said, "I am sure you know, because of your air force observers, that we have a very large naval force just over the horizon and we want you to know that if you feel you need help we will give it to you." His answer, in effect was, "I have had a talk with Ramfis and he has agreed to respect the civilian authority and as long as I don't have any reason to think he won't, I don't think I ought to do anything like you are suggesting." I also took the occasion to tell him that the way that some respectable citizens of his Dominican Republic were being treated was not making a very good impression abroad and was hurting his government. That was the last time that I saw him.

Q: While you were there Ramfis ran wild didn't he?

DEARBORN: That is true but I never saw anything of Ramfis. He was a playboy. He was out of the country a lot.

Q: I am talking about after his father's death, but you weren't there very long were you?

DEARBORN: A week. Trujillo was killed the 30th of May and I left the 5th of June.

Q: Were you replaced by the next ranking officer?

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DEARBORN: No, they took a fellow out of the War College, named John Calvin Hill, and sent him down as Consul General, until Ambassador Martin came. I think they didn't get along too well, and Hill went as DCM to Venezuela. Hill had a very interesting time of it before Martin arrived.

Q: How did you and the Embassy and later on you and the Consulate General view Castro? He was just coming to power at this time and this was sort of a cataclysmic event and it was your next door neighbor. If we were getting nervous, what was happening in the Dominican Republic?

DEARBORN: Trujillo used this. He was getting angry with us and in order to bother us and maybe change our minds about him, he was threatening to be chummy with the communists, which was ridiculous. But he sort of waved this in our faces—if you don't like me I will go over to Castro. Of course Castro had no desire to get in with Trujillo, so from that side there wasn't anything. But Trujillo was making all these motions to join hostile forces against us with anyone he could find. And with some success. It did bother Washington. It also added fuel to the degeneration of relations.

Q: Kennedy came in in January, 1961. Joseph Kennedy had connections everywhere, did you have the feeling that he had connections with the Trujillo government?

DEARBORN: No, I didn't. Joseph Kennedy's name didn't crop up in the Embassy. The one that did crop up was a fellow who had been a trouble shooting ambassador of ours—I think he had been with the Flying Tigers—William Pawley. He was a nuisance. He had a brother who was in charge of their family interests in the Dominican Republic and they had been cozy with Trujillo. One thing that happened was that I had a message (Feb, '61) that Senator Smathers (Florida) was coming to the Dominican Republic and wanted to talk with Generalissimo Trujillo about our relationship, etc. He wanted me to go with him to see Trujillo—the last thing I had any desire to do.

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Anyway, he came and just as he came Bill Pawley arrived. Of course, Bill had every interest in seeing that things went well with Trujillo. Smathers took me aside and said, "You know, Bill Pawley is arriving too, but when I see Trujillo I do not want him with us." So then Bill Pawley joined the group and said, calling Smathers by his first name, "Now, when you go to see Trujillo I want to go with you." Smathers couldn't get out of it by that time. He didn't want to say no to Pawley I guess because Pawley had influence in Florida.

In addition, Pawley had Bebe Rebozo, a friend of Nixon's in Florida, with him. So Senator Smathers, Bill Pawley and Beebe Rebozo and I all went to see Trujillo. Smathers gave him this talk. He said, "Generalissimo you have the opportunity to be a great hero in this hemisphere. You have the opportunity to be one of the few dictators, one of the only dictators, who was ever able to turn his country into a democracy during his lifetime. If you would do that you would really be a hero to your people and to the hemisphere." I sat there thinking, "Oh lord, you don't know who you are talking to." Trujillo said just what I could have written as his script, "Senator, I don't know what you are talking about. I am just a citizen in this country. I don't have any public office. We have a president, an executive, a legislature, a supreme court just like your country. I really don't know what you are talking about." So Smathers didn't get anywhere with it. That was one of my more interesting moments. Hector Trujillo, a brother, was figurehead President and was present at the interview.

Then Trujillo did a funny thing. He had a custom that every once in a while he would have a mass baptism. He was about to have one and he wanted the Senator to come and see it. Trujillo would be godfather to all these little kids. So we went into the Palace chapel. Of course, pictures were everything. What Trujillo wanted was a picture of himself and the babies and Senator Smathers. I was standing next to the Senator and just when he was to snap the picture I would step back and get behind the Senator so I wouldn't get myself in it. The Senator would pull my arm and say, "Come on, get in the picture." So I would step back next to him and just as the picture was to be taken again I would step

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back behind the Senator again. When the picture came out, I think it was in the New York Times or local paper, I was not in evidence. Thirty years later I saw that one of the pictures not earlier published did have a piece of my head.

Q: One last thing about the Dominican Republic, you were mentioning about the Bishop and the Papal Nuncio and about some papers?

DEARBORN: Yes, that was very important. Before I moved into the Embassy and Ambassador Farland was still there, a new Papal Nuncio arrived. He was a commanding figure. He was regal— tall, a man about 50 years old. The previous Nuncio had been a little old, nondescript man who never caused any problems. This Nuncio got off on the wrong foot. He hadn't been there long and they were about to inaugurate a new international airport. So the Foreign Office sent a message over to the Nuncio that they would like to have him give an address at the inauguration. He said, "I don't think that is exactly the proper job for a Papal Nuncio." However they put some pressure on him and he said, "Well, all right I will say something." They said, "Well, please submit what you are going to say before you do it." Well he didn't like that very much either, but finally he did. They came back saying they wanted him to put in something about the glories of the Generalissimo, etc. The Nuncio refused saying that was not his role. So he didn't get off on the right foot.

As time went on the bishops (I really don't know how much the Papal Nuncio inspired it and how much the horrors of the Generalissimo's activities alone inspired it), a critical pastoral letter which they all signed. Not the Nuncio but the six bishops. Trujillo blamed the Nuncio whether he was at fault or not. One of the bishops, as I said, was an American, and one was a Spaniard; the other four were Dominicans. This was anathema to Trujillo. No one had ever done this before. The pastoral letter was criticizing him and was read in churches all over the country. He was livid. This was another indication that relations with the Church were on the decline.

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I became very friendly with the Papal Nuncio and I used to stop on the way to the office after lunch and visit him almost every day. We would swap information. He was a great source of information and I guess, for him, I was also. This was noticed by Trujillo's all seeing secret service and radio news programs noted that the Consul General and the Nuncio were becoming very friendly and that this was a suspicious development.

To show you what little tricks Trujillo used to do—I guess he wanted to scare the Nuncio out of the country, or something. One day I received an invitation to a reception at the Papal Nunciatura at noon on such and such a day. It was the day Ambassador Farland was leaving, so I hadn't quite taken over. I was surprised because I had seen the Nuncio the day before and he hadn't said anything to me about a reception so I sent John Barfield over to find out what it was all about. He came back and said, "There isn't any reception. These are fakes. The Nuncio has never seen these invitations."

At the appointed hour the Generalissimo appeared at the Nunciatura gate and told the gate person that he had come to the Nuncio's reception. The boy went back in and told the Nuncio that the Generalissimo and several cabinet members were at the gate and had come to the reception. The Nuncio said, "You go back and tell the Generalissimo that if he wants to come in by himself I will be very glad to talk to him but there is no reception here." So the boy went back to the gate and there was nobody there. This was the Generalissimo's way of harassing the Nuncio.

Q: This regime was obviously an odious one. How about the officers, you were DCM and responsible for running the Embassy and later on the Consulate General, was it difficult working with your officers? Were some of them taken in by the Trujillo largess?

DEARBORN: By the time I was there the Ambassador had set the tone for the relationship. There was one officer who had been there five years and he was on quite good terms, which was good in a way because he was the Consul. Harry Lofton was his

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name. Harry had a good working relationship with the police. Harry was far right in his thinking and I would suppose Jesse Helms would be a hero for him.

Q: We are talking about what we would call today a right wing conservative, a law and order person.

DEARBORN: Yes, that would have been Harry. On the whole he didn't cause problems, but in the last days of the regime he did. He was making it difficult in staff meetings. So when we were changing from Embassy to Consulate General I sent an eyes only message to the Department recommending that in the shuffle, Harry, having been there five years and not being in accord with the policies that were being followed, should be moved to another post. Harry never forgave me for that, but I thought five years was long enough.

Q: That is a long time, particularly in a situation where one can get too close, because this can also reflect...

DEARBORN: We had a very good group. John Barfield was chief of the political section and he was excellent. Then we had Charlie Hodge as economic counselor and he had a couple under him. Then we had a naval mission that was very good. Then we had an attach# who represented the Defense Department, Ed Simmons, a Marine Colonel who later became a General and is now in charge of the Marine Library here in Washington. A very nice fellow. We had a very small AID program. I think there was only one person, maybe two. There was an American school. We had, of course, USIA. One of our USIA officers was declared persona non grata because they said he was going around saying things against the Generalissimo. In fact, I, myself, almost got caught because I was talking at the hotel to a newspaperman whose name you would recognize if I could say it, who came through...

Q: Was it Tad Schultz by any chance?

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DEARBORN: No, he was more in the ownership class. Tad Schultz is another story. I kept him out of jail. (The man was Roy Howard, now I remember.)

Anyway, they saw me talking to this newspaperman in the hotel and then they said I had been telling him bad things about the Dominican Republic. I could see what was coming and went right to the British Ambassador. I said, "Look this is what they are saying and I don't know what game they are playing, but I absolutely deny the whole thing. It is not true. It is true that I was talking with him, but I didn't say anything to cause the Dominicans any embarrassment." The Ambassador picked up the ball right away and went over to the Foreign Office and told them this. With the British Ambassador having taken this position they decided not to follow through on it. I think by that time maybe they thought they would like to get rid of me and were looking for a way to do it. I don't know.

I would like to mention one more thing on the Dominican Republic. One day a student came into my office scared to death. He said they were after him, they were going to kill him, they were going to torture him. A great big fellow who belonged to one of the best families. He was just scared out of his wits. I knew what was going to happen. There was a secret movement among the students and Trujillo was dying to get the names of all these people. If he could catch one of them he could torture him and make him give the names of the others.

So when I heard this, what I saw happening was this kid being taken out to the torture chambers, being abused and maybe even killed and a whole bunch of kids having the same thing happening to them. All I could think of was that this just cannot happen. So I said, "Well, you can stay here." I had a little bathroom off the office and stuck him in there. It was terribly cramped and it was a hot box; there was no air conditioning in the whole Embassy at that time. I said, "You just stay in there until I think of what to do." I think he was in there two days. Nobody in the rest of the Embassy knew this, except John Barfield whose office was on the other side of the bathroom from mine.

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For a couple of days I kept the boy in there, I brought him food down from the house, still trying to think of what to do. Finally a fellow came in, Dan Kirtley, who was the pilot of the naval mission plane. He was the last person of what had been the Embassy to leave the country. He came in to say goodbye. I suddenly had a bright thought and said, "Dan, would you be willing to undertake a little skullduggery for your old friend here?" He said, "What would you want?" Dan was always a man of action. I told him I had this fellow and described the whole situation to him. I said, "He is either going to get tortured or killed and a lot of other people too, and I just wonder if you on your last takeoff from the Dominican Republic would take him with you." He said, "You have him at my plane at 2:00 and I will take him."

Well, there were nearly insurmountable obstacles between the office and the airport: how to get him out of the office, for example. First I had to get him up to the Residence. The office and the Residence were in the same block and there was a long lawn and swimming pool between them. John Barfield said, "I can back up the car to your office door and we can put him in the trunk." I said, "That is too obvious. Let's just walk up to the Embassy as though nothing is wrong and maybe nobody will notice. If anyone does notice I will say it is Bill Raft." Bill was a Marine Guard who was the most like the young man in physical appearance. So we did that.

The garage of the Embassy was in the back. We took him out to the garage and then I drove the car out. We got halfway down the driveway to the street and I said to the boy, "I am going to open the trunk and you crawl in." I was just opening the trunk when the servants in the Embassy came out of the kitchen and saw us.

So I said, "No, don't get in the trunk," and I pulled down the lid. I said, "You get in the front seat between John and me. Just sit there." Of course I didn't want them seeing me putting someone in the trunk. I said, "If they say anything later I will tell them that we had a bet on to see if you could fit in the trunk, or something."

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At the end of the driveway there was the street and up on a hill looking over all this was the national police station. Of course they weren't all up there looking at us, but it was just another thing to think about it. So we got in and started for the airport and this fellow grabbed a newspaper trying to hide behind it. I told him to put it down and act natural. So we drove through town, took the airport highway and about three quarters of the way to the airport on a stretch where we could see both ways and nobody was coming I said, "Now you get in the trunk." So I put him in the trunk and we drove the rest of the way to the airport.

We drove over to where Dan Kirtley's plane was, which was apart from the other planes. Dan said, "Is he there?" And I said, "Yes, he is in the trunk." There was a very low entrance to the plane so he said, "You back the car up to the door." Just as I was doing this, a Dominican who was hanging around the airport and used to help Dan out with things appeared. I said, "Now what do we do?" Dan began looking around the car and said to the Dominican, "Hey go back there and get a pump, the Consul's car has a low tire and he can't drive around like that." So, with the Dominican sent back for a pump, I backed the car up to the plane and the fellow crawled into the plane.

There was a tower with air controllers there and I didn't know what they were seeing or what they weren't seeing. But fortunately something happened that hardly ever happened: three international flights, I think one taking off and two coming in, were active all at the same time; and it started to rain. It was just plain luck. I nervously watched while Dan took off for Puerto Rico with his passenger.

I went back to the office and sent off a message through my CIA channel which started something like: I have probably broken every rule in the book, but...one thing I knew was that I couldn't let them catch this fellow. I often wonder where he is now.

Q: Well, thank you, we will continue starting with you going to Bogota.

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Q: This is the second interview with Henry Dearborn. Today is May 8, 1991. You were mentioning that there were a couple of things that happened concerning your time in the Dominican Republic that we might add on now before we move on.

DEARBORN: Yes, one thing that occurred to me was when President Kennedy sent his own emissary down to talk to Trujillo to try to persuade him to leave his dictatorship, whether to leave the country or just leave power I am not sure. Of course, I was in close contact with what we called the pro-US opposition and they were very good sources for me. One day I had a message from them outraged because they said they understood that Ambassador Robert Murphy had appeared in the Dominican Republic secretly and had talked to Trujillo. How could it be that I did not inform them of this? I went back and said that I very much doubted that. I didn't believe that Robert Murphy had come officially without my knowing it. They came back and said, "You are absolutely wrong, our sources tell us that he is indeed here."

Of course, Robert Murphy was a retired Foreign Service officer of great distinction. I was very indignant and sent off a pretty strong message to the Department, the burden of which was that I couldn't doubt much longer that this was true. A sort of "How could you do this to me?" message and "How could I be expected to retain the confidence of these people, if I didn't let them in on something of that sort." I never heard boo from the Department on my message. I thought at least I should have been castigated for being obstreperous. The next time I went back to the State Department I was on consultation and was talking to the head of intelligence for the Department, I think his name was Hughes at the time. I told him that I had been very curious about the telegram having never heard from the Department. He said, "Well, no wonder, you know when that telegram came into the State Department it was the first time that anybody in the State Department, myself, the Secretary or anyone else, had ever heard of it. It was something that Kennedy did on his own with Murphy." I might say with equal lack of results as

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Senator Smathers which I have referred to earlier. But I thought that was interesting with Kennedy acting on his own and not confiding in the Department.

My last connection with President Kennedy with regard to the Dominican Republic occurred on June 7, 1961. When Trujillo was killed, the President was in Paris. My nighttime message (May 31AM) reporting the event was promptly relayed to him—so promptly that there were hostile allegations that he knew about the assassination before it happened. Absolute nonsense, of course. I left the country on June 5. On June 7 I attended a meeting in the White House with the President and the main subject was the DR. This was as high level a meeting as one could assemble—certainly the most imposing that I ever attended. In addition to the President there were Vice President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, CIA Director Allen Dulles, J.C. King (also of CIA), and Acting Assistant Secretary of State of Inter-American Affairs Wymberley Coerr. The President asked to be informed on what was transpiring in the DR and then he asked for suggestions as to what was likely to happen next and what our position should be. His questions were directed to Dean Rusk, but Rusk deferred to me for response. I have no record of this meeting unfortunately, but there must be one in the Kennedy files. I reported on my meeting with President Balaguer of June 4 in which he said that he did not require our assistance for the time being as Ramfis had agreed to respect the civilian authority. As I recall, I said that I did not believe there would be a bloodbath though there might be isolated vengeance killings. I also said I thought that we should continue to support the pro-US dissidents since as long as the Trujillo family was in the DR they would try to control the country and the reprehensible conduct for which they were noted would be perpetuated. I remember Kennedy saying that he wanted to be sure that whatever replaced the present government was acceptable to us. He did not want the government overthrown until he knew what would replace it.

One enlightening part of the discussion occurred when I interrupted and said: “I think that.....” The President interrupted me and said, “We already know what you think.” That

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showed clearly enough that he had been reading my cables. After the discussion on the DR, the President went on to talk about situations in Angola and other places and about getting some businessmen into the AID program. The latter subject was mostly between him and Secretary McNamara. When the meeting broke up, he shook hands with me and said, "You did a good job down there, but I don't suppose you should go back, do you?" I told him that I would rather have heard him say that than any one and that I agreed it was best not to go back. I told him that I had already been assigned to Bogota and was very happy with that assignment. I did not see him again until he came on a state visit to Colombia. This conversation with the President I remember practically verbatim—I guess because it was personal.

The other thing I thought I should mention is that some years later, 1975, so that is a long time later, I was called to testify, if that is the right word, at least talk to a committee that Nelson Rockefeller set up to investigate CIA activities, especially in relation to assassinations. I went and talked to them on April 22, 1975.

Q: Let me put into the record right now that Mr. Dearborn has given me a tape which he taped in April, 1975 regarding his talk with the Rockefeller commission concerning US actions against Trujillo in the 1960-61 period. We will put this in this transcript at this point.

Taped by Henry Dearborn in April 1975.

My relationship to CIA, June 1960 - May 30, 1961

I arrived in the Dominican Republic as DCM in July 1959. Ambassador Farland departed permanently in May, 1960 and I became Charg# d'Affaires a.i. On June 16, 1960 I was requested by CIA to be its link with certain opposition leadership. This request had the approval of the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs. My written understanding with CIA was that the US was not prepared to undertake any overt action against Trujillo while he was in control of the Dominican Republic. That CIA was prepared to assist the opposition clandestinely to develop effective force to accomplish Trujillo's overthrow and

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that prior to such time as dissident groups had established a provisional government which would control a substantial sector of the Dominican Republic, CIA assistance would be channeled covertly. (I would say that it was not long afterward that the US did take overt action against Trujillo in several ways.)

I was authorized to convey this understanding to my Dominican contact from June 1960. For the duration of my time in the Dominican Republic I was in continuous touch on a clandestine basis with a limited number of pro-US dissidents. They gave me information about Trujillo's activities, both national and international and about their own aspirations and plans. On my side I communicated to them such information and advice as I was requested to communicate by the CIA.

The US broke diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic on August 28, 1960, but we continued consular relations. I stayed on as Consul General. Almost all non-State Department personnel departed, including the CIA station chief. There were two exceptions. One was the secretary in the CIA office and the other was the Air Force Colonel in charge of the missile tracking station at Samana Bay.

After the departure of Station Chief Reed I was in effect the station chief until the arrival of a CIA chief, I think in January, 1961. Even after his arrival I continued to be the principal contact with my dissident sources. My dual role presented problems for me as I had to remember when I was acting with my CIA hat and when with my State Department hat. My CIA messages went through those channels and the CIA secretary would deliver incoming messages to me. The CIA station chief, who had arrived in January left immediately following the assassination of Trujillo. I left about a week afterwards, also.

I believe that the reasoning in Washington was that I should depart promptly since the Trujillo family continued to be powerful and since I was known to have been in touch with the dissidents there was no knowing what conclusion the Trujillo intelligence apparatus might come to.

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There were three officers in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs in the State Department who knew about my CIA work. The Assistant Secretary, his deputy and his special assistant. Last named was the Bureau's liaison with CIA.

That is the end of my memo on my relationship with CIA during my time in the Dominican Republic.

Now a memorandum on the United States and the Overthrow of Trujillo.

In 1959 there were two attempts from outside the Dominican Republic to overthrow Trujillo and there was growing dissatisfaction with him inside the country, especially among certain military, professional and business people and clergy. By January, 1960, our assessment was that Trujillo was likely to be overthrown and we were concerned lest a power vacuum would result into which communist elements supported by Castro would rush. By that time we had drawn up contingency plans as to what action we would take in such an eventuality.

By July 1960, our dissident contacts were telling us that they had drawn up a list of seven possible ways by which Trujillo might be ousted. All ways except the seventh they believed to be beyond their capabilities. The seventh was assassination. It appeared, however, at that time they had no specific plot and that they were talking in generalities. Neither then nor later did they seek to involve us in an assassination. What they wanted from the US was moral support and, later, material and token weapon support.

The following are some of the ways in which we gave moral support to the dissidents:

1. We established our clandestine contact with them.
2. We made several attempts through prestigious persons to persuade Trujillo to give up his dictatorship, preferably by leaving the country. One attempt was made through General Mark Clark. Another through Senator Smathers, another through Ambassador Robert

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Murphy. Clark was acting for President Eisenhower and Murphy for President Kennedy. None of these approaches shook the Generalissimo's resolve to remain in power. These were all secret missions when they were undertaken. I was with Senator Smathers when he made his pitch.

3. We issued official public statements critical of Trujillo, and

4. In August, 1960 we broke diplomatic relations.

After the break in relations we took steps to offer material support to Trujillo's opposition.

1. We levied economic sanctions against the Dominican Republic, and

2. In January, 1961 I was authorized to tell the dissident contacts that we would make certain military items available to them.

The memo following this one will deal with the arms question.

After August, 1960 we developed more detailed plans for dealing with a provisional government in case Trujillo fell from power. We knew who of our contacts wished to head such a government, but we did not know whether these elements would be capable of gaining a foothold. The situation was going from bad to worse. As the result of the economic sanctions imposed by the US and the OAS, Trujillo was threatening US businesses resident in the country and was also threatening the pro-US Dominicans. His media were carrying on a steady press and radio war against the US

In this atmosphere by the spring of 1961, those who favored assassination in concept began to develop concrete plans. Considering the opposition of the business community, the clergy, the US, and the OAS it was believed that those who assassinated Trujillo would be regarded by heroes both at home and abroad. Also since no pressure that had been tried, i.e., persuasion, sanctions, diplomatic ruptures, statements of censure, had induced

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Trujillo to give up, these dissenters saw assassination as their only hope of ridding the Dominican Republic of the dictatorship.

It is my firmly held view that those who killed Trujillo and those who backed them up would have acted if there had never been a CIA. They were only waiting for as favorable domestic and international atmosphere to give them the required courage. The concept and details of the plot were theirs, and theirs alone. It is true that the US helped create this atmosphere more through public than covert action. Being convinced that Trujillo was on the skids it was our purpose to cultivate the pro-US dissidents so that the future government of the Dominican Republic would be pro-US rather than anti. Such help as we gave them was to help them come out on top of any rival groups. We never favored assassination, in fact, we opposed it to no avail.

When in April, or May, 1961, I received detailed assassination plans from my contacts, I advised Washington that what had been a possibility now had become a probability. I was convinced of this because of the detailed nature of the plans and the electric tension in the Dominican air. This information caused consternation and I was instructed to urge that any such plot be abandoned immediately. My contacts responded that this was a Dominican affair and there was nothing we could do to stop it. This message I transmitted to Washington.

Not long afterward the plot was carried out.

This next memorandum is on the question of arms.

I do not recall exactly when the pro-US dissidents first urged us to supply them with certain military equipment. However, I know for certain that in January, 1961, I was instructed to tell them that delivery of such equipment outside of the Dominican Republic had been authorized. I do not know what, if anything, was delivered to them. Perhaps nothing, because my contacts continued pressure on us to offer at least a token. They argued that there were members of their group, especially younger ones, who were demanding that

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the US show our support in this tangible way. My contact said that it was important to them not to lose the support of this younger element as there were many able people among them.

Perhaps CIA records will show, I do not remember just when I was authorized in a CIA memo to turnover to the CIA station chief several, I think four, perhaps two, rifles that were left with the Consulate General on the departure of the Naval Attach# in 1960. This must have been in April or May, 1961. I turned over the rifles and I do not know to whom they were ultimately delivered. So, I do not know whether any of them were used to kill Trujillo. Since a number of high military personnel were in on the plot, the obtaining of a small number of arms sufficient to kill a man did not seem to be a problem for the plotters. Consequently the dissident request for arms from us seemed symbolic rather than anything else—a move to help our pro dissident contacts to hold doubting Thomases among them.

I discovered after returning to the United States that no one in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs in State had known of the CIA message authorizing me to turnover the rifles. This came as a shock to me as there had always been a very close and harmonious relationship in the Office of the Assistant Secretary and CIA regarding my activities and instructions that were sent to me. This was the only lack of coordination that I recall. Since the authorization was rather an important one I have always wondered if it may have been cleared in the White House as there were officers there who were closely following Dominican developments.

This is the end of the three memoranda on the Dominican Republic.

Tomorrow, April 22, 1975, I am going to appear before Vice President Rockefeller's committee which is investigating CIA activities abroad. In this case they want to talk to me, I suppose, about CIA involvement, if such there was, in the assassination of Trujillo.

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This is Tuesday, April 22, and at 9:30 this morning I went to 712 Jackson Place and called on Mr. Monty Grey of the Rockefeller Commission. I spent two hours and a half discussing with him CIA activities in the Dominican Republic, particularly from January 1, 1960 up through the assassination. He was, of course, particularly interested in any arms that the CIA might have brought into the Dominican Republic or might have authorized to be delivered.

Mr. Grey had done a great deal of research in both State and CIA files prior to my arrival and he had many pages of notes on the basis of which he asked questions of me.

This was a fascinating exercise for me because I had, of course, forgotten quite a number of communications and actions to which he had reference. Particularly, and to my surprise, I had forgotten that I had delivered a revolver to a Dominican doctor. The reason that I had done this was not in the CIA files and so I was able to recall after having my memory jogged that this doctor had asked me if I could obtain a revolver for him in as much as he greatly feared some sort of attack on his family by one of Trujillo's agents and he, the doctor, had no means of defending himself or his family. I thereupon asked the CIA station chief if he could obtain a revolver for me for the doctor, inasmuch as the doctor was a principal source of information for us. The station chief, thereupon did obtain the revolver and I gave it to the doctor.

I made it clear to Mr. Grey that the doctor's request for this revolver had no revolutionary purpose whatever, but was entirely for his personal use.

DEARBORN: In the same year, the Senate set up what was called the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities. It was to study alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders. The reference is 94th Congress, First Session, Report 94-465, issued November 20, 1975.

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I spent about six hours talking to this committee's lawyers under heavy questioning. They told me that they didn't think the Senators would want to talk to me, but four days later I had a telephone call telling me that Senator Church and his group did want to talk to me. So I went up and spent several hours alone with about six of the Senators—the ones I remember are Senators Church, Mathias, Tower, and Hart. Hart was a hero to me. The questions became quite detailed. Each Senator had a lawyer sitting next to him reminding him of different things. One of the lawyers, a woman probably in her mid '30s, spoke up and said, "Wasn't this one of the most dramatic assignments of your career?" I said, "Yes, of course it was." She said, "Well, doesn't it seem strange to you that you don't remember more of the details?" I said, "I hope there is someone in this room who is over 65 years old who finds it difficult to remember who said what to whom 15 or 20 years after it has happened." Senator Hart spoke up and said, "I certainly can testify to that. It happens to me all the time." He was the only Senator there who was over 65.

The main questioning was by Senator Church and the lawyer who sat next to him. It went on for a very long time. That whole testimony appears in this Senate Report.

Q: Good and it has been published...

DEARBORN: Yes, anyone can get it from the library. There is a lot in it on the Trujillo assassination and various other assassinations.

Q: Okay, we will move on. You were assigned for a fairly long stretch to Bogota?

DEARBORN: Almost six years.

Q: From 1961-67.

DEARBORN: September, 1961 to April, 1967.

Q: I wonder if you could tell me how that assignment came about?

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DEARBORN: Fulton Freeman was Minister Counselor in our Embassy in Belgium and was assigned to Bogota as Ambassador. He was in the Department and was looking for a DCM. He talked to the people in Inter-American Affairs and my name came up. He looked over my record and talked to people who knew me and said "Well, that is the one I want." And that is how I happened to go. I had never seen him before.

Q: Fulton Freeman had at one time been a Far Eastern expert hadn't he?

DEARBORN: He still had his Chinese language. He took great delight in talking Chinese with the Chinese Ambassadors.

Q: He was sort of moved out of the line of fire after the McCarthy time.

DEARBORN: He came out on the Gripsholm when everybody was coming out of China, and he never went back.

Q: How did he operate, because you served twice with him didn't you?

DEARBORN: To my way of thinking he was a masterful leader in the sense of how to run an Embassy. He knew how to get the best out of his people. He wasn't one of these ambassadors who I always thought made a mistake when they would surround themselves with two or three people and operate with them and let the rest of the Embassy sort of float. He was a great team player and he expected input from everybody. Everybody seemed to like him and the way he operated. He had staff meetings every morning with the top officers and then he had a large staff meeting once a week with all the officers. He would tell them what was going on, what he was doing, what was going on between our country and that country. This gave everybody the feeling of being in on a team effort. Everybody could ask questions. So it made for a very good operation.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there in 1961?

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DEARBORN: I would say one of the main problems that Colombia had when I got there was with the violence in the countryside which was ruthless and savage. It wasn't as bad as it had been, it was tapering off somewhat. There was a time when you couldn't travel in the interior without expecting a problem. This was violence between political parties. It had a long tradition, between the Liberals and the Conservatives. There was an old party leader called Laureano Gomez who was President and the hero of the Conservatives. Then there was a short period of dictatorship under General Rojas Pinilla, but he was thrown out eventually.

The man who was most responsible for bringing the government back into constitutionality was Alberto Lleras Camargo who had been director of the Pan-American Union previously. A very able statesman. He worked out a system where they would have alternate Presidencies between the parties—four years of Conservative, four years of Liberal.

When I arrived he was President. The violence continued in certain parts of the country and some of it was between the parties, but also there was some growing violence among leftists who wanted to overthrow the government and put in a leftist system, Marxist system. That was another type of violence. This didn't happen too much on the coast, it was mostly in the interior.

The other main problem, I guess, while I was there was the dollar crunch. They were having a difficult time getting dollars. As a result, AID and the Monetary Fund were involved in trying to help Colombia adjust their system to alleviate this problem. Some very sticky balance of payment loans were conducted and caused quite a bit of resentment on the part of the Colombians because ...

Q: You were saying that there was a monetary problem.

DEARBORN: The US AID and Monetary Fund people who were interested in monetary adjustments were putting too much pressure on them. More than they could stand

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politically. In fact, I was noticing the other day something I had forgotten. While leafing through an old Colombian file I found a performance report on myself in which one of the favorable comments the ambassador made was that I had assisted considerably in setting the proper perspective in these type of negotiations by emphasizing the political aspects and that certain things were just not possible if we didn't want to overthrow the government.

Q: Just to spell this out a little more. There often is this clash within a country—the United States telling a country what it should do, etc. But sometimes these things can have tremendous impact on the political situation which can blow it all up. Were you arguing with the financial wizards that deal with this in the State Department?

DEARBORN: We would have discussions in staff meetings. Once I got into a difficult position because President Lleras Restrepo one day called me over to the Presidency, I was Charg# at the time, and talked about this very question. He realized that I understood his political problem and said that he really appreciated my sympathetic attitude. We let up on the pressure as a result of my going back and telling what had happened. It was something you did have to put the brakes on.

Q: What were American interests in Colombia?

DEARBORN: Well, we had oil interests. There were various smaller American businesses. Colombia was a great exporter of flowers. I had one friend who left an oil company and went into exporting flowers. It still is an important export to the US

We had rather an active American-Colombian Chamber of Commerce. The presidency was supposed to alternate between a Colombian and an American. Once we got into the situation where an Argentine was president because he represented Braniff Airways. We had airlines coming in there. There were several small businesses. Petroleum was the biggest.

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Q: How heavy did you find the hand of the American business side on the Embassy and all?

DEARBORN: Not very. One thing that Ambassador Freeman did, both in Colombia and later in Mexico, that was very helpful for us to keep tabs on American businessmen, was to have a meeting once a month with certain selected members of the American business community. It was a good source for us and he would tell them what we were up to that wasn't secret.

The petroleum companies were of course very important and I suppose in their own relations with the government they probably exercised an influence. But I would not say that American business was driving our relationships with Colombia. Our relations with Colombia must have been among the better relations of all countries. I remember with our CIA operations. We had a big CIA operation in Colombia. Sometimes they wanted to do rather extreme things and I had to remind them that Colombia was a friendly country and they didn't have to bug offices. They voted with us in the UN practically all the time; they were very cooperative. The only sticky problem we had were these aid negotiations and that was a matter of political consideration.

Q: Did you feel that this was just a matter that the CIA was there and as long as they were there they had to keep active?

DEARBORN: Well, you know, we were trying to keep tabs on what Castro was doing. There was a strong leftist movement in Colombia off in the mountains trying to do what Castro did—and still is. But they went into decline after the Bay of Pigs. When it became evident that Castro had tried to build up a nuclear capacity...

Q: You mean after the Cuban missile crisis?

DEARBORN: That is what I mean.

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Q: This was October 6, 1962.

DEARBORN: I know the exact day it was because I was in New Hampshire. My father died on October 20 and I called the Department to ask for permission to fly up to New Hampshire. I would turn things over to the counselor for political affairs, be gone a week and then come back. I had a phone call back from ARA saying. "Look, we have your message and we are thinking about it. We will look into it." I thought that was pretty strange. I thought granting my request would be automatic. I was Charg# which was the problem. The Ambassador was on home leave in the States. Finally they called back and said, "We have finally arranged things so that you can do it. But you leave on Saturday. The Ambassador will arrive a few hours after you leave and will be there all the time that you are in the States. You go back next Sunday and the Ambassador will return to the States to complete his home leave." I wondered what was going on here, the Ambassador interrupting his home leave to come back? Well, what had happened was that the White House had already issued instructions that all ambassadors were to be at their posts and they knew what was coming up. So I was in New Hampshire for a week and came back passing the Ambassador in a plane.

Q: When you came back, what was the reaction that you were getting from your Colombian contacts to the whole Cuban missile crisis?

DEARBORN: I suspect it was the same in most of Latin America, but in Colombia they did a double take. They thought more carefully about the dangers of Cuba. The question of quarantine came up. I have forgotten the date now, but Averell Harriman was sent on a special mission around Latin America to tell the Presidents about actions against Cuba. I wish I could remember better about this... Covey Oliver was Ambassador at that time, so it must have been quite a bit later. The Harriman thing had to do with Cuba I am sure, but I can't remember exactly in what way.

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Q: Well, we were tightening the screws on Cuba all the time. This was probably a bolt in the OAS to keep Cuba out or something of this nature.

DEARBORN: I wish I could remember more to put it in perspective. One incident in connection with that Harriman visit was interesting. Valencia was President and he used to become ill with some frequency. Some people said he drank too much and other people said that it was a health problem. Harriman had a prearranged appointment to call on Valencia at a certain time. I went with him and Ambassador Oliver to the Palace, got out of the car and the Secretary General of the Presidency came to the Palace door and said, "You know, I am terribly sorry but President Valencia is not going to be able to receive Mr. Harriman, he is very ill."

Of course, the first thing that went through my mind was, "Was he really ill or what?" Then he continued to say, "If the President is feeling better by evening he will come out to the Embassy to see Mr. Harriman." Sure enough about 8:00 at night the President drove out to the Embassy and we sat there and discussed hemisphere security matters. I can't remember the details.

About two days later I had a call from the Secretary General of the Presidency saying, "Look, when you came over with Mr. Harriman didn't you have a member of your USIA people taking pictures?" I said, "Yes, as a matter of fact we did. We had a picture of the Secretary General, Harriman, the Ambassador and myself talking at the front door of the Palace." He said, "Well, I want a copy of that." The reason was that Alfonso Lopez, the leader of the opposition party, had come out in public and said that it was absolutely undignified and unfitting that the President of Colombia had gone to the American Embassy instead of having Mr. Harriman come to see him. So with this picture they could prove that we had gone to the Palace first.

Q: I take it it was fairly easy for you and members of the Embassy to deal with the Colombian government.

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DEARBORN: Yes, they were cooperative on substance and friendly personally. Not only that they were a very democratic country. You didn't have to worry who you talked to. You didn't have to fear being seen talking to someone. Anybody would talk to us. It was a great place for political reporting.

Q: Well, what is it with this sort of openness of the society? What causes this reputation and the one of violence. Even today Colombians are considered to be a pretty dangerous group who immigrated to the States.

DEARBORN: It is rooted in history and I don't know how to say it. I do remember the local newspaper, Es Espectador, which was the second largest paper, actually conducted an inquiry among the readers. This wasn't on violence but was related. The question was "Why are Colombians so irritable?" Over a two week period people called and wrote in and then the paper reported on the replies. There wasn't one single person who wrote or called in who denied that they were irritable. But there were all kinds of explanations. Some said the altitude; some said the racial mixture. They all had some notion as to what the problem was.

But it is related because irritations caused the violence. The organized violence, as I say, goes back in history between parties. But then the savageness of the violence...shooting a bus load of people who happened to go into the wrong zone, or giving somebody the necktie cut as they called it where they cut your throat and pull your tongue through the opening, cut off your head and stick it in your stomach...all this absolutely outrageous behavior. I don't know.

When I was in Colombia (Barranquilla) the first time back in the early '40s, the coast was very pacific. Nothing like this would ever happen. We all talked about the violence in the interior.

Q: How about the drug problem, which now, of course, dominates?

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DEARBORN: We had no drug problem. I never heard the word narcotics while I was in Colombia.

Q: What was the role of our military attach# then?

DEARBORN: The attach#s were doing what they do everywhere. But the military missions were the ones that exercised the influence. We had an Army mission, a Naval mission, an Air Force mission in addition to the respective attach#s.

Q: There you were running the Embassy from time to time or at least supervising its general management, did you find that the military missions sort of went off on their own?

DEARBORN: No, we had good relations with the military missions. I can't really remember any problems with them. Of course, the attach#s were engaged in intelligence work. They were all good people. They tended to be officers who were at the end of their career. The missions, of course, were under General O'Mara in Panama—the Cinc...

Q: Southern Command it was called, or something like that, wasn't it?

DEARBORN: Yes. In fact, my relations with him were great. He invited me up to Panama to go through his whole operation. He took me into the leaded room.... And he came to Bogota on occasion. He was rather “an enfant terrible” as far as the missions were concerned. They were all scared to death of him. But he was very nice to me. That was a time when I was the Charg#.

Q: I can't remember the dates, but you must have been there during the time we had to send troops into the Dominican Republic? Johnson sent troops in there.

DEARBORN: Yes, I was.

Q: How did that play in Colombia?

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DEARBORN: Oh, nobody liked it. We had a Foreign Minister called Caicedo Castillo who used to drive Tony Freeman crazy because he was so slow about doing anything. I remember Tony asked me once to go over and talk to Caicedo about the Dominican Republic. I suppose it was that time.

There was nobody in Latin America who liked that. We had a solid international commitment on nonintervention. I am sure Bob Woodward, when you talked to him, probably told you about his experience with Dean Rusk. Bob, I think was the Assistant Secretary at the time and thought that he should remind somebody about the commitment. He went up and tried to tell Dean Rusk about these commitments. Rusk listened and then pulled out his maps and said something like, "Now where would be the best place to land?" As far as Lyndon Johnson was concerned, he apparently gave very little notice to this commitment.

Q: This is not unknown. We messed around in Nicaragua during the late 1980s and wouldn't pay any attention to the International Court over what we were doing there.

DEARBORN: Yes. Georgie Ann Geyer has just written a book on Castro. She is an old time journalist. She was in the Dominican Republic interviewing people at the time of this. In her book she is absolutely outraged that we did this. She said it was unnecessary. It was just that Johnson was afraid it was going to become another Castro's Cuba.

Q: Well, you had two other ambassadors after Freeman left. Covey Oliver came. He was not a career officer. Reynold Carlson followed. He also was non-career. How did this work out?

DEARBORN: Great. They were wonderful, especially Covey. I wasn't with Carlson very long. Tony Freeman had gone to Mexico and he wanted me to go to join him, but the Department said I would have to stay a few months with Carlson who had never worked

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for the government, as far as I know. So I didn't know him as well as I knew Covey. I was with Covey Oliver his entire two year tour as Ambassador.

Covey was great. He was well prepared. He had been dean of the law school, international law, at the University of Pennsylvania and he was well acquainted in international circles. As far as the Embassy was concerned, he just let me run it. I laughed because when he first came in our first talk he said, "You know I look forward to these evenings after the day is over, we can sit and have long talks about things." That was the last time we ever did it. He had the idea he would only work on things that he was interested in. He had no idea how demanding the job would be. However, he immediately became extremely busy. I still keep up with him. He lives down on the Eastern Shore at St. Michaels. He also has a house in Marine County, California. But he was a very good, conscientious ambassador. We continued to operate the Freeman system.

Q: How about our various aid programs, particularly the Alliance for Progress, how did this work out?

DEARBORN: I think very well, except for the negotiations on finances which got sticky everything was very smooth. You had people in so many branches of things, agricultural, education, housing, etc. When I got there they had these agricultural services. Agriculture, of course, is the big thing in Colombia and, of course coffee exports to the US were an important aspect of our relations. All the people who were working with the Colombians in the AID mission seemed to be delighted with the Colombians and with their work. I really can't think of any real difficulties, except in balance of payments negotiations.

Q: I was told that at one point the Colombians sort of surprised everybody in the AID mission by saying, "Okay, we think we can do it alone now, we don't need your experts anymore."

DEARBORN: That was a fraud. I know exactly who that was. It was Sanz de Santa Maria. During these negotiations he got mad and blew up one day and said in so many words,

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"The hell with you, we will go it on our own." But he didn't mean that. He was a very dramatic fellow and you have to take that into account. Was it Sam Eaton who told you that?

Q: No, it was a man who is trying to work up an oral history account from the Latin American side of the Alliance for Progress. I want to say Messner, or something like that.

DEARBORN: Was he in Colombia?

Q: I don't know, but he was telling me about it. He said to ask this question.

DEARBORN: I guess it is the same thing. He might have run across some memo or telegram, but Sanz de Santa Maria in my opinion was just putting the pressure on us by purposely throwing a fit.

Q: But this was drama and no real change in the situation?

DEARBORN: None at all.

Q: Was there anything else you wanted to say about your time in Colombia?

DEARBORN: We had a very large Peace Corps. Colombia was one of the first countries to receive the Peace Corps.

Q: I was going to say that I really think it was the first.

DEARBORN: The Peace Corps and I arrived in Colombia the same month, September, 1961. It got to be over a thousand. I remember the Ambassador had a staff meeting the focus of which was to study how big we should let this get. It might get to be counterproductive if it got too large. It was mostly in community development. But it also got into educational television. In fact, I just ran across the other day, I don't know if you have ever heard of Tedson Myers who is a lawyer and came down to negotiate an

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agreement with the Colombians on educational television. Now he is President of the Cosmos Club and we ran across him the other day. I hadn't seen him for years and he reminded me of this. I think he was also on the DC Council.

But then they also got into nursing. Mainly it was community development out in the boondocks.

Q: Was there concern about them getting mixed up with the violence?

DEARBORN: They never did. We thought about it, but they never did. We left them completely alone. We never sought them out, they didn't want to be connected with the Embassy. We always kept our connection with the head of the Peace Corps. Aside from that, unless some of the boys and girls came looking for us, we didn't bother them. But I used to go off at least once a year inspecting our consulates in Colombia and would see some of them then. They would take me out to see their projects. President Lleras Camargo was delighted with the Peace Corps. He said it was wonderful.

I am trying to think of the things that stand out most during my stay in Colombia. One was the Kennedy visit to Colombia and I was the officer in charge of the visit. It was a tremendous success. They all felt that they knew him personally and when he died the whole country went into mourning. It was a tremendously impressive thing.

Once I went out with the only person who could have done it, to visit some Indians called the Mutilonis who live in a hunting, fishing stage of civilization. Nobody could go into the area because they had bows and arrows and would shoot strangers. They did this at the time a pipeline was being built across Colombia to the coast. The builders had a running war with these Indians because the pipeline went through their territory. The Mutilonis shot a number of the oil workers. They had arrows with reverse notches which you couldn't pull out. You had to take them out in the direction they were going. But this fellow I knew,

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Bruce Olson, had lived with them for some time and he asked me if I would like to visit them, and I did. It was something never to be forgotten.

Traveling to places like Leticia, down on the Amazon in the southern most corner of Colombia was a great experience. It is another world buried in the Amazon jungle. You can practically walk to Brazil from Leticia. There were more big cities in Colombia than in most Latin countries. Most Latin countries have one or two big cities whereas Colombia has 8 or 10. But the cities weren't always the most interesting as the hinterland was often fascinating and the roads for seeing it was fairly good.

Q: All right, you then went to Mexico City as DCM in 1967. Did you go directly from Colombia? How long did you serve there?

DEARBORN: Yes I went directly to Mexico City. I was there from April, 1967 to September, 1969. I went there because Tony Freeman asked for me. He left Colombia in 1964 to go to Mexico. His DCM was Clarence Boonstra who was being assigned as Ambassador to Costa Rica. So Tony Freeman asked for me and the Department said I could go but would have to stay a few months with newly arrived Reynold Carlson. So as soon as those few months were up, I went to Mexico.

Q: What was the situation in Mexico? The Mexican-American relationship is always a difficult one. Did you find yourself really in a different world?

DEARBORN: Well, the thing that surprised me the most was that they were so friendly. I had never been in Mexico. Back in Yale Graduate School I had written a history of Mexico from the Aztecs to Cardenas in 75 pages. So that was what I knew about Mexico. Considering our history I was astonished at how friendly they were and how helpful they were. What they were saying behind my back I have no idea. But they certainly put up a good front.

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It was a completely different relationship with the government. In Colombia the Ambassador or I, if I was Chargé, could see the President anytime we wanted to. But that didn't happen in Mexico. You just didn't see the President. You went through the Foreign Minister. I think that was quite a shock to Tony Freeman when he got to Mexico. He wasn't used to that and he had to get used to it because that was the way they operated.

I was fortunate in a way. As you say, the relations have difficulties, but looking over a long period, our relations with Mexico during the Freeman years were about as good as they have ever been. We had an excellent relationship with the Foreign Minister, Antonio Carillo Flores, who had been ambassador in Washington. He was an exceptional person for any position. He would have been a great Secretary General at the UN. In fact the Chileans approached him and asked if he would be receptive to that position. I went over and I asked him if it were true that he had been approached. He said, "Yes, they did ask me, but I gave them General Sherman's answer." You could tell how much he knew about the United States. I don't think there was another Foreign Minister in the world who could have said that.

Q: Yes, "If nominated I will not run, if elected I will not serve."

DEARBORN: I remember sending a telegram back to the Department reporting exactly that. Later I found out that they thought that was my interpretation of what he had said. I said, "Not at all, that was what he said." He was excellent and the reason in large part of our good relations at that time.

Q: I have never served in Mexico but have heard that traditionally as they slice things up within the ruling party, the Foreign Minister is sort of thrown to whatever serves as the left there and is often more anti-American. At least there are so many close relations on the military side, on the security side and all with the United States, so the Foreign Ministry is left to be the playground of those who come out of the universities who are kind of anti-American and all that.

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DEARBORN: Carillo Flores was the Foreign Minister during my whole period and that was my good luck because he was pro-US. His right-hand man was also pro-US. Now there were elements in the Foreign Office that were extremely nationalistic and they took positions in the UN against the United States. The man in charge of their relations with international organizations, Garcia Robles, was always taking positions in the UN against us. It irritated the Department no end and they thought he was a communist, which he never was. In fact, we became quite friendly with him. The Counselor of Political Affairs was friendly with him. It didn't change his mind any, however. He was a strongly nationalistic Mexican.

I was fascinated by the fact that the CIA station chief, who had been in Mexico for many years, Win Scott, knew him well. He knew everybody by that time. In fact, he knew the President. He was one man who could go in to see the President whenever he wanted to because in the past when the President was Secretary of Government, Win Scott had a close relationship with him. So Win's relationship with the President was special. When he retired, just before I did, I said, "Look, I know you don't want a big party, but let me take you and Janet out to dinner." I said, "I will take you out to dinner and invite any other couple whom you might want and we'll have a nice evening." I couldn't believe it when the man that he wanted was Garcia Robles who was the bete noire of the US in the Foreign Office. But it wasn't communism, it was Mexicanism.

We had our problems. All the Latin American countries broke relations with Cuba, but Mexico didn't. The Cuban Ambassador was present in Mexico. In fact it got to be embarrassing at one point because he had been there so long that when the dean of the corps was transferred, the deanship fell on the Cuban. In order to avoid embarrassment to the Mexicans the Cuban just went home.

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The CIA had a big operation and their main concern was watching the Russians. It was the first place I had been where there was a Russian Embassy. They had a large establishment.

Q: Were we concerned about the Soviet influence in Mexico?

DEARBORN: The main job of the Soviet embassy in Mexico was to watch the United States. So we were watching them watch us. In fact, when in 1968 the Olympics were held in Mexico, we had an Olympics attach# and an assistant Olympics attach# sent down. The latter was a CIA agent. I guess they were hoping that he could get some information, or defectors, etc. I think I have to mention that that fellow was Philip Agee. As far as I knew he was a very nice fellow. I got along well with him. He wrote up excellent reports on the Olympics. But after I left Mexico, he defected and wrote a book exposing a lot of CIA activities which caused a terrible situation.

Q: He was responsible for fingering CIA operators overseas, including the killing of Robert Welsh in Athens in 1974, because he continued a series of books about the CIA.

DEARBORN: He wrote this book called "Inside the Company, CIA Diary". I never knew what was wrong with Phil, but I know his personal life was messed up. We had a telegram come in addressed to the Ambassador from a Washington lawyer saying, "I want you to tell Phil Agee to send his children back to the United States immediately." So the Ambassador said, "I don't know what this is about. Call Phil in and find out." I asked Phil and he said, "Well, what happened is that my wife lives in the Washington area with our two little boys. We are divorced. She has custody of the children. I went up to see them and I saw how she was treating those little boys [they were about 3 or 4 years old, let's say]. She keeps them locked up in the apartment and won't let them go out to play. They are going to grow up to be misfits. I couldn't stand it. I told her I wanted to take them to the zoo. Instead of taking them to the zoo I took them to the airport and brought them to Mexico. I am not going to return them." So CIA told him that he had to return his children

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or he was fired. He opted to be fired. If you asked Phil if he were fired, he would say, "No, I quit". If you ask CIA, they would say he was fired. Anyway all of this was going on in his life and I always thought he might have had some resentment against the company. How much a part that played in his defection, I don't know.

Q: I would have thought that being DCM in Mexico would be a very complicated job because we have such a huge mission there.

DEARBORN: We had 675 people there.

Q: And then there are all these ties of people both in Washington and Mexico City who call each other by their first names—from the Agricultural service, the Parks service, etc.—who bypass the Embassy. Was this a problem?

DEARBORN: I think one place where it caused us headaches was in the protection business, because being on the border with people going back and forth they would sometimes get into trouble. Sometimes they would get murdered, sometimes they would murder. As a result of this, often a congressman would get involved, because the family would write to their congressman and he would demand action. The guy would be in jail and we would be pressed to get him out. Things like that. There were a few cases like that.

Another problem we had was with LBJ's brother. We assigned an immigration officer to go down to Acapulco and latch on to LBJ's brother and try to keep him out of trouble, because he was always getting in trouble.

I was just noting that in spite of the fact that we didn't have any military missions, and only a one-man AID office in the field of education, it was still a very large Embassy. We didn't have any of those normal adjuncts that we generally have in Latin America, but we had activities that we didn't have anywhere else just because it was a border country. The FBI had a large office because of fugitives, stolen cars, etc. Customs had an office there, Narcotics had an office there. The only interagency spats that I can remember were

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between Customs and Narcotics. And that only reflected what was going on back home. We had a Public Health officer, we had a US Travel Service officer, we had a man from the Weather Bureau, the Immigration Service and then we had nine consulates. We had a supervising consul general and five consuls in the Embassy. So it was a very big thing. If we had had the AID and military missions besides it would have been colossal. It was like being mayor of a city to be DCM.

Q: Was there any problems with the consulates in Mexico?

DEARBORN: No, we had very good people in those consulates. I don't remember any problems.

I remember one funny thing. The Consul General in Hermosillo was leaving. He left quite suddenly and we needed a Consul General immediately. I happened to think of a fellow by the name of John Barfield, who was taking a leave of absence at his own expense and going to LSU for a year. He was the right grade and had had experience in that field. I had just gotten a letter from him a little while earlier saying that he was now interested in the big picture. He wanted to get into policy matters and out of the consular field. But I immediately thought of him and telephoned him. I said, "John, I have your letter here about what you are interested in in the future, but there is an opening for a Consul General in Hermosillo, would you be interested." He said, "Give me five minutes to readjust my thinking and I will be there." Within a couple of weeks he dropped everything and he became Consul General. He had been in Italy and he wanted to brush up on his Spanish so he started attending Spanish classes with the teacher who was giving lessons in the office. The first lesson he took he fell desperately in love with her. They were married and now he is retired and they are living happily in Tucson, Arizona. A happy ending.

Q: You were there during the Olympics. It was sort of a messy business with students...

DEARBORN: Well, just before the Olympics there was a blowup. There were some students that were trying to embarrass the government before the Olympics. The

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government was determined not to have any disruptions during the Olympics. They came down very hard on those students and there were no disruptions. They managed to keep the law enforcement people pretty well out of sight. They were behind buildings ready to pounce, however, and this was generally realized.

The Olympics were a tremendous success in Mexico. They had an interesting aspect to them. I don't know whose idea it was, but they had a sort of cultural fair along with the Olympics. All of the participating countries sent cultural contributions— paintings, dramatic productions, etc. We sent down the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, among other things. They came to the Embassy and played for us.

Q: A New Orleans jazz.

DEARBORN: It was a great success. All along the main avenue they had these posters painted by children of various countries—from Africa and Asia, etc. It was very impressive.

Q: What was the Embassy attitude towards the PRI, the party that has been in power ever since 1910, or something?

DEARBORN: The PRI was a fact of life. The Mexican power rests on a tripod of business, agriculture and labor. The government has to keep those three elements satisfied. Agriculture and labor tend to be on the left side and business on the right side. They do a balancing act, if you do something for one you have to find something to do for the others. They always say that the President of Mexico is so powerful, but the fact is that he is powerful because he keeps his finger on the pulse. In an election time, the candidate of the PRI goes out and stumps the country as if his life depended on it. There is a reason for this. He has to keep in touch. He doesn't sit up there and order people to do this and that. He knows what he can do and get away with. But the Mexican stance in general has to be leftist. Anyone in the State Department and US government has to know this. And they

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have to have the image of standing up to the United States. This is an essential part of a Mexican government retaining its support. But within that we get along pretty well.

And then we have tools that help us. We have these inter- parliamentary meetings with Mexico. One year our delegation from congress meets with their congressional delegation congress down there and the next year, up here. They pick different places to make it more interesting. Once they met in Hawaii, I think. These meetings help the legislators of each country understand their respective problems. But you are right about there being so many non-governmental connections—even more than when I was there.

When I was there Mexican policy on foreign investment would not allow a business dominated by foreign investment. Now you can. This is a big change.

Q: Did illegal immigration play a major role?

DEARBORN: It was something that was always listed among our problems. In the inter-parliamentary meetings, for example, it was always a concern. The Mexicans were interested in how the United States treated Mexicans who came up here. We had had an agreement called the Bracero Agreement where a certain number of seasonal workers were allowed to come up, but that wasn't functioning when I was there—it was before.

There was tremendous tourism, of course. Wherever you get a lot of tourists, protection becomes a major problem. There were a couple of dramatic cases. There was one up in Monterrey. There was a man in jail for murdering some tourists. He was an American. His people appealed to US Congressmen and we got all this pressure to do something about him. Finally he escaped and the last I heard of him was that he escaped to Texas and not too long afterwards was murdered in a barroom brawl.

There was a dramatic rescue of somebody whose name I forget. It was written up and I think they made a movie out of it. He was a man who was in prison and was rescued by helicopter—he was flown right out of the prison yard.

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Q: What happened? There must have been quite a lot of pressure on the Embassy to do something to get the guy back.

DEARBORN: I don't remember that. I think both sides were glad to be rid of him. In fact, the fellow who escaped up in Monterrey, we always thought the Mexicans looked the other way, being tired of him and the problems he was causing.

Q: How about corruption? Was this a problem?

DEARBORN: From our point of view, corruption was a way of life in Mexico. For them it was a way of doing business. The mordida, as they call it, is the way of supplementing a salary. Yes, from our point of view, nearly everyone was on the take. To get a contract you had to throw in a little extra. If the police stop you, you can give them a little something and get off. It is a way of life. I don't know. When it is so deeply rooted how you can get rid of it. That is the scary part. In any country, if it digs in how do you get it out?

Q: Did you retire from this post?

DEARBORN: Tony Freeman left in January, 1967. I was Charg# for over six months. Along about February or March, I had a message from the Department saying that I had been out 15 years and had to come home. It took me until the next morning to send off a letter handing in my resignation. My thought was that I was 57 and had 3 more years to go to retirement and I didn't want to work my last three years in the Department. I had had 11 straight years in the Department, but that was a long time ago. After they got my letter I had a phone call saying, "Look, would you be willing to stay until we find a new ambassador?" I said, "I am willing to stay here for 10 years; it is the Department where I don't want to work." So they said, "Great, we haven't found an ambassador yet so agree that you should stay on until we do and then stay a couple of months with the new ambassador."

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Month after month went by and no ambassador. About July Bob McBride was named Ambassador. When he arrived I stayed with him until September and then I came home. Then I waited for financial reasons until February to retire.

In September, the very month I came home relations with Mexico went into a tailspin because Nixon, recently in the Presidency, and his cohorts did something that we never would have done under LBJ. He suddenly, overnight, closed the border because of the narcotics problem. He didn't tell the Mexicans in advance even though he had just met a few days previously with the Mexican President. Well, Diac Ordaz was furious. He said a wall of suspicion had arisen between our two countries. This was pretty strong language considering how good our relations had been. So the last thing I really remember doing before retirement was writing a memo and sending it to everybody I could think of saying that this was not the way to handle relations with Mexico. We had been very successful with talking things over; being open and frank. But this secretiveness and drastic action was not the way to do things.

Q: Do you recall what caused this sudden border closing? Was this a reaction within the White House?

DEARBORN: I think what happened was that the Justice Department, and especially a man named Kleindienst grabbed the narcotics thing and ran with it. They overpowered everybody else who tried to stop them. I remember saying in my memo that I didn't blame the Justice Department and Mr. Kleindienst for what they did because after all they are policemen and they did what they were supposed to do. But I said I couldn't understand why they weren't politically overridden. I know Kleindienst got a copy of this memo and he didn't like me very much.

Q: He later went to jail didn't he?

DEARBORN: He did.

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Along about June, after I had retired, Charlie Meyer who was Assistant Secretary for Latin America called me on the phone and said, "Look we want you to come back to work." I said, "Well, I retired to retire not to go back to work at the Department." He said, "Well, what happened is that we don't have a director for Mexican affairs and we have a Presidential visit coming up and we need somebody in there who is familiar recently with everything. Ambassador McBride told us that he thinks you are the one. It will just be for a month or two." So I agreed and went back for a month or two—it got to be three months, four months, five months. Finally I wrote a desperate memo repeating that I had retired to retire not to work in the Department. Finally they let me loose again.

Q: Well looking back on your career, what gave you the greatest satisfaction would you say?

DEARBORN: I think that along the way to feel that I was doing something of importance. I can't think of anything else that I would have done that I would have been better at. I ended up with a happy feeling. I didn't feel unhappy when I retired. I just figured that those last few years before compulsory retirement didn't matter and I didn't want to spend them in the Department. I was quite happy that I was retiring on my own initiative instead of being told that I should retire.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much. I really appreciated this.

DEARBORN: I didn't know quite what to expect. This job must be very interesting to you.

End of interview